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ATTENTION:

Statement by  
the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs  
Martin J. Hillenbrand  
before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee,  
May 24, 1971  
on a bill to Establish an  
American Council for Private International  
Communications, Incorporated

I appreciate the opportunity to testify on this Bill to provide for the establishment of a corporation to be called the American Council for Private International Communications, Incorporated, which will support private American organizations active in the field of communications with foreign peoples. This proposal has the full support of Secretary Rogers.

The Council as it is conceived would make grants to eligible media from funds appropriated by the Congress. The private nature of the Council is designed to enable the media which it supports to fulfill their role as objective reporters and independent commentators, not as spokesmen for the US Government.

The Chairman of the Board of the Council would be appointed by the President, as would the Vice Chairman and the other nine members. All would be

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selected for their ability to ensure the disbursement of grants in the national interest. The Board would be responsible for assuring that the officers of the Council established adequate liaison with the Department of State.

The Council would annually account to the Congress and its responsible committees for the proper use of grants the Council makes. Through the involvement and interest of the Council's Board members, all of whom would be appointed from private life, the Council would be able to determine that activities of the grantees were exclusively those appropriate to mass-media operations for which they were funded, including news gathering and analysis.

It is foreseen that the Council would use its appropriation primarily to grant funds to two existing private broadcasting corporations, Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, which are incorporated respectively in the States of New York and Delaware and which have obtained licenses abroad to transmit programs in their capacity as private organizations.

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I would like to review briefly with the Committee the importance of these two radios to the peoples to whom they broadcast and their value to other people, including our own, who share the view that an informed public is a safeguard of peace. I would like especially to underline how important it is that these radios retain their private character.

In regard to the significance of these radios, a principal source for my remarks are my personal observations and those of my colleagues who have served in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. I know of few matters related to this geographic area on which there is such a degree of agreement among us who have served in that area as on the beneficial and constructive roles of Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe. The service of each radio is in essence the same. Radio Liberty provides to the Soviet Union and Radio Free Europe to most of Eastern Europe a large volume of information and commentary which the peoples of those countries do not receive from other sources, but which they need in order to make informed judgments

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on public issues. Domestic media in the USSR and Eastern Europe speak with a single voice, commonly omitting or distorting coverage of events about which the public has every need to know. In place of full news accounts, questioning editorials, and independent commentary, the daily fare never challenges policies or goals set by the governments nor asks how wisely the public's money is being spent. A public so deprived of essential information has difficulty finding ways to promote its own interests with respect either to domestic or to foreign issues.

It is true that international radio services which function as agencies of various governments -- the Voice of America, BBC, Deutsche Welle, Radio-transmission et Diffusion Francaise, and others -- fill a part of this information void. However, out of well-founded diplomatic considerations, such official Government radios must take care to avoid the charge of interference in the internal affairs of other nations.

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In my view, there are no fundamental conflicts of interest between the American people and the peoples of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. In many respects, the interests of all these people can be seen to converge. For them as well as for us, large resources which could be allocated to meet human needs are siphoned off for the purposes of other policies. It seems a reasonable assumption that under any system an informed public can better alter this situation in the interest of its own welfare than can an uninformed public. I am convinced, as are many of my colleagues, that the input of information by the radios into the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe strengthens the ability of these peoples to promote their own general welfare. If these peoples do improve their own welfare, it will be possible for us further to reorder our own priorities to the benefit of the American public.

Further, let me stress that the sole purpose of the radios is to disseminate information and to present analyses of that information which are thoughtful

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and responsible. Those of us who have lived in the reception areas credit the radios with a large measure of success in fulfilling their purpose. This success is borne out by the large listenerships which the radios have attracted. RFE broadcasts in the appropriate language 18 hours a day to Poland, 19 to Czechoslovakia, 18 to Hungary, 12 to Romania, and 7-1/2 to Bulgaria. The results of thousands of interviews conducted by professional, independent polling organizations with visitors from Eastern Europe in the recent past indicate that the RFE audience in the five countries named above is at least 30 million persons. This is about one-half of the total adult population. In certain countries during periods of crises the percentage of listeners has shot up dramatically to 80 or 90 percent of the population over the age of 14. I should add that these large audiences have been developed notwithstanding extensive efforts to jam broadcasts. A significant proportion of the broadcasts gets through even where efforts are made to jam them because the

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effectiveness of the jamming varies with the time and place, and because of the tenacity of the listeners.

Radio Liberty broadcasts 24 hours a day in Russian, 10 in Byelorussian, 13 in Ukrainian, 4 in Armenian, 4 in Azerbaijani, 4 in Georgian, 4 in North-Caucasian languages, 4 in Tatar-Bashkir, and 4 in Turkestani languages. While it is more difficult to arrive at an accurate estimate of the actual size of Radio Liberty's listenership, an indication of its effectiveness is the effort made by the Soviet government since 1953 to jam around-the-clock all Radio Liberty frequencies. It is estimated that the jamming network costs the Soviets over six times as much annually to operate as the annual budget of Radio Liberty itself.

While estimates of the number of Radio Liberty listeners are of necessity less precise than those for Radio Free Europe, there is extensive corroborative evidence which shows that, like Radio Free Europe,

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it has a large and tenacious audience. The costly effort of jamming itself is a clear indicator as are the thousands of references to the programs of Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe in the Soviet and Eastern European press. Also, each year, several thousands of letters addressed to Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe get past -- or around -- the censor or are sent to them by listeners travelling in the West. In these, there is an oft-repeated refrain: "Everybody around here listens to your program...." This may be an exaggeration, but it gives some idea of how widely the broadcasts of these radios are listened to. Further evidence comes from foreigners living and working in these countries, who confirm that these peoples depend on the radios and that a significant proportion of the broadcasts penetrate the jamming. One of my colleagues, fluent in Russian, who recently spent a two-year tour in the Soviet Union, has said that in all his wide travels in that country he seldom met an individual who did not admit to listening to Radio Liberty.



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The final point I wish to emphasize is the importance of the radios' preservation of their private character. I mentioned that, in contrast to international radios which are identified as government agencies, Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe are able to report and comment on the domestic affairs of other nations much as would any commercial medium operating in a democracy. This is the unique character of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty and is the key to their continuing value, for the reasons I have given. Additionally, these radios are, in order to prolong their present transmitting licenses, obligated to their host governments to maintain their private character. In recent months, Soviet and Eastern European media have increased their attacks on the radios in an effort to dislodge them or at least seriously curtail their services. In reaction, considerable public and media support for the radios and the principles for which they stand has been evoked in Europe. That good-will can best be preserved by enactment of the proposed

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legislation which will enable the radios to continue to function effectively with their private character unimpaired.

Mr. Chairman, we are at a point in the evolution of events in Europe at which we have, perhaps, significant opportunities for meaningful negotiation. This is a welcome situation. But we must bear in mind that our quadripartite negotiations for improvement of the state of affairs in and around Berlin have not yet been successful after many months of discussion. We do not intend, however, to stop trying. Our SALT talks in Vienna have advanced to the point at which, as the President has said, we have agreed with the Soviet government "to concentrate on working out an agreement for the limitation of deployment of anti-ballistic missile systems" and, together with that, "to agree on certain measures with respect to the limitation of offensive strategic weapons". It is our hope that we can agree with the Soviet Union on how to relate these issues and how to deal with them to mutual advantage. We now have the prospect of exploring another major issue -- mutual balanced force reductions. Mr. Brezhnev has told us, however, that we must drink from that bottle before we find out what wine is in it.

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Much more than an atmosphere of negotiations is at stake in these opportunities. At stake is not only the accommodation of divergent Western and Soviet governmental interests, but the basis on which that accommodation is to be reached. Will it be achieved on the basis of a recognized Soviet sphere of influence confronting the NATO alliance? Or will it be achieved on the basis of new and more secure relationships in Europe permitting individual countries to develop natural and normal economic, cultural, and informational links with each other? If the second alternative is realized -- if a free and open exchange of information develops within and between the individual countries of Europe -- the valuable private international media of which I have spoken will no longer have a valid function. This is the goal for which these radios are working. Until that goal is achieved, there is every reason to encourage Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty to continue in their present role.

It is for this reason that I wish to stress, in conclusion, that the establishment of the American Council

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for Private International Communications will be an act fully compatible with the objectives which I believe you, Mr. Chairman, and the members of your Committee share with those of us who are engaged in implementing the President's desire to move from confrontation to negotiation.

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